

# WHCoA Independent Aging Event Summary Report

Event Name: "Aging Well, Now and in the Future"

Event Date: June 24, 2005

Event Location: Clarion Hotel and Conference Center  
9700 Bluegrass Parkway Louisville, KY

Attendance: 150 seniors and professionals

Sponsors: AARP Kentucky  
KIPDA (Kentuckiana Regional Planning and Development Agency)  
Area Agency on Aging  
KAG (Kentucky Association for Gerontology)  
K4A (Kentucky Association of Area Agencies on Aging)  
SE4A (South East Association of Area Agencies on Aging)

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## Planning Along the Lifespan

**Priority Issue #1:** The Social Security and Employee Pension Systems are in jeopardy.

Proposed Solution(s): Preserve our social security system; protect employee pensions. Re-examine the social security tax cap; require all workers to pay social security tax on all annual earnings. Strengthen regulation of employer-sponsored retirement plans so that promised retirement benefits from companies are guaranteed.

**Priority Issue #2:** LTC insurance is not affordable/standardized and difficult to understand.

Proposed Solution(s): Provide a national (social) insurance program for community based long-term care. Make the preferred Long Term Care model a community based service system integrated with existing senior programs that maintain and support seniors in their homes. Provide tax incentives for LTC insurance if a national insurance program isn't developed.

**Priority Issue #3:** Community Based services are not adequately addressed in our health care system.

Proposed Solution(s): Enact a national health plan that includes and emphasizes community based long term care. A national healthcare system could limit costs, spread the risks involved with an aging population and provide improved access to minority and low-income groups. The system should also provide for cost sharing where appropriate.

**Priority Issue #4:** U.S. citizens don't understand financial planning for their future.

Proposed Solution(s): Provide early and on-going education for financial planning. Make retirement planning classes mandatory prior to collecting social security benefits. Improve education and awareness of financial exploitation using the media. Educate early (middle school and high school) about Long-Term Care financing, savings, pensions, and economics over the lifespan.

**Priority Issue #5:** Affordable senior housing is out of reach for those who need it most.

Proposed Solution(s): Preserve and enhance incentives for senior housing. Expand subsidized housing incentives to include options for remaining at home (in the community) and assistive living facilities in the community.

## **Workplace of the Future**

**Priority Issue #1:** Older Americans want and need to work longer.

Proposed Solution(s): Tailor benefit packages for older workforce to include flexible work schedules (time off and hours of work), job sharing opportunities for older and younger workers in tandem with mentoring programs. Provide work for benefits only program to attract older volunteers to new jobs. Make benefits more portable (vacation, sick, financial) between jobs and workplaces. Promote more part time employment opportunities by reducing or eliminating pension and social security penalties. Provide transportation assistance for older workers especially those no longer driving. Educate older adults about transportation resources – during job orientation.

**Priority Issue #2:** Not enough resources are available for working caregivers.

Proposed Solution(s): Promote adult day care services at the work place for dependents of older workers. Provide tax incentives to employers who provide adult day care services at the workplace or who provide vouchers for adult day care services in the community during working hours. Encourage work/life offices to help employees balance work and family.

**Priority Issue #3:** Ageism.

Proposed Solution(s): Host a national campaign promoting the value of older workers; educate the public and employers on the benefits of hiring older adults (diversity awareness training). Explore alternatives to encouraging early retirement of valuable employees. Educate and empower the older worker on marketing themselves better.

**Priority Issue #4:** Work environments are not senior friendly.

Proposed Solution(s): Promote simple accommodations: larger print copies, larger computer screens, and padded seating to make workplaces easier on older bodies. Provide federal tax breaks to employers who provide specialized assistive technology.

# Our Community

**Priority Issue #1:** No one seems to understand the value of care giving.

Proposed Solution(s): Elevate the status of care giving. Create an environment that encourages people (not necessarily relatives) to care for elders in the community by increasing support for caregivers, expanding respite programs, funding in-home care, and subsidizing FMLA. Promote community adult day care services so more elders can work longer and maintain a safe environment for their spouses/loved ones.

**Priority Issue #2:** Communities are not prepared for the aging population.

Proposed Solution(s): Encourage local neighborhood development planning to embrace accessible community design. Expand senior-only subsidized housing communities.

**Priority Issue #3:** Safe shelter is not readily available for aging victims.

Proposed Solution(s): Provide funding so that every state, county, and community has an emergency shelter for seniors who are neglected, exploited or victims of crime. Pass the "Elder Justice Act". Mandate adult protective reports, services, hotlines, and education coordinated across service networks, and among professionals of social agencies, law enforcement and courts.

**Priority Issue #4:** Community Based Services work, but are not available to everyone.

Proposed Solution(s): Expand capacity of existing community based services. Combine programs to reduce overlapping of services and coordinate others. Simplify requirements for funding from the local level through the federal level. Ensure that basic services are available and accessible by increased funding for federal aging programs. Make senior centers more responsive to community needs and especially to working seniors.

**Priority Issue #5:** Not enough attention is given to mental health needs of older adults.

Proposed Solution(s): Improve programs and facilities for mental health services to the aging population. Expand programs and facilities to provide services where none currently exist.

# Health and Long Term Living

**Priority Issue #1:** Community based care works; should be the priority for funding.

Proposed Solution(s): Make community based care the preferred service model. Fund community based care as an alternative to nursing homes, include in-home care, adult day care and help for families. Improve and increase access to health care for the de-institutionalized.

**Priority Issue #2:** The U.S. health care system is too expensive and broken.

Adopt a one payer health care system.

Proposed Solution(s): Adopt a one payer health care system. Eliminate the U.S. private insurance "sick care" system and adopt a "wellness" system that provides medical care for everyone and reduces the costliness health care in the U.S.

**Priority Issue #3:** No one seems to understand that deteriorating mental health is not a normal part of aging.

Proposed Solution(s): Host a national campaign to improve awareness of mental health problems in older persons. Increase resources for geriatric medicine/care; target greater resources for mental health and substance abuse treatment for elders.

**Priority Issue #4:** Disease prevention is not a priority.

Proposed Solution(s): Spend more health care dollars on disease prevention. Funds for disease prevention programs including education and Long-Term Care planning should be increased. Increase number of health screenings (covered by insurance) with educational materials available. Provide health insurance incentives for physically active seniors. Support programs like National Senior Olympics.

**Priority Issue #5:** Many seniors still cannot afford the medicines they need.  
Provide universal drug coverage for everyone.

Proposed Solution(s): Provide universal drug coverage for everyone. Every senior should get what they need (drugs). Provide for cost sharing where appropriate.

## Social Engagement

**Priority Issue #1:** Senior centers should focus on health and wellness.

Proposed Solution(s): Provide increased funding for senior centers with health and wellness programs giving them flexibility to develop programs that meet local participant needs and those of the “baby boomers”. Reduce isolation and loneliness with more affordable opportunities for seniors to socialize outside the home (care centers/senior centers); provide Federal support through community and faith based initiatives.

**Priority Issue #2:** Most Americans know very little about aging and elder issues.

Proposed Solution(s): Use education funding and make elderly people part of the process for students of all ages. Encourage elders visiting schools to talk about life experiences taking time to sit, talk, share and listen to each other; collecting oral histories and committing them to writing.

**Priority Issue #3:** Seniors want to be safe on the road.  
Mandate periodic driving tests for everyone.

Proposed Solution(s): Every driver should take (mandated) periodic driving tests. Require driving tests every 5-10 years for everyone and annually once you reach 70 y/o. Put a law in place that helps health care professionals notify communities and families when certain drugs or diagnosis (visual) impairs driving abilities of elders.

**Priority Issue #4:** There is not enough coordination of health and fitness resources.

Proposed Solution(s): Require that health care providers, public health departments, social service agencies, and others coordinate their efforts as a pre-requisite to full funding.

# Marketplace

**Priority Issue #1:** The transportation needs of elders remains unmet.

Proposed Solution(s): Provide for more public transportation for elderly and disabled. Federal standards should include transportation for shopping and errands, from non-urban areas, non-emergency medical transport, and ease of vehicle access. Require transportation planning before building new houses. Think about where you want to build new homes. Enforce fuel efficiency standards for public and private services and use alternative fuels.

**Priority Issue #2:** Communities are not equipped for effective communication with seniors.

Proposed Solution(s): Adopt senior friendly communication strategies. Make larger fonts standard for printed materials, prescription labels, handbooks, street signs, and other products. Provide senior-friendly road signage, wider road lanes, and better visual lines on roads. Improve road lighting.

**Priority Issue #3:** There is a growing need for assistive and safety devices.

Proposed Solution(s): Provide access to assistive and safety devices; keep Medicare funding for them.

**Priority Issue #4:** Not enough emphasis is placed on "Livable Communities".

Proposed Solution(s): Promote universal community design. Provide tax incentives for builders using universal residential design and universal community design. Increase federal funding for weatherization and LIHEAP programs.

**Priority Issue #5:** There is a growing shortage of workers in the field of aging.

Proposed Solution(s): Promote a shift in the value of jobs that serve seniors to attract workers into the field. Encourage intergenerational interaction beginning with elementary schools. Promote an "adopt a senior" program in high school to encourage youth to become professionals in the service of elders. Encourage volunteerism, tuition credits/ loan repayments for work in the senior segment.